

WASH. POST
30 NOV 1986

WASHINGTON POST
30 November 1986

A Spy Speaks Out

Pollard Says He Meant Only to Help Israel, Not Harm U.S.

By Wolf Blitzer

EMBITTERED AND physically isolated, Jonathan Jay Pollard spends his days in a federal prison in Petersburg, Va., awaiting sentence after becoming the first American convicted of spying for Israel. While he waits, Pollard is being questioned by the U.S. Justice Department to see if he will implicate others. What he did, he said in the first interview he has had with a reporter since his arrest a year ago, he did for love of Israel and with no intention of hurting the United States.

But Pollard, who is Jewish, is now treated as a pariah by Israel, obviously embarrassed that he was caught. And the American Jewish community, always concerned about allegations of dual loyalty, has turned its back on him.

Pollard is a confessed criminal, but he is also a victim of the ambiguity of the American-Israeli relationship. The intricacy of this relationship makes it possible for Pollard to feel that he has committed a crime but done nothing to hurt the interests of the United States. This same intricacy makes it possible for Israel to benefit from Pollard's clandestine efforts and yet aid the United States in its investigation of its own spy.

Last June, Pollard pleaded guilty to the espionage charges against him. His wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard, pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of possessing classified documents. She has been released on bail. Both are awaiting sentencing, which is not expected before the end of January at the earliest.

Pollard acknowledges that he violated the great trust he had been granted as a civilian intelligence analyst for the U.S. Navy by providing Israel with numerous classified documents.

But although Pollard is very intelligent, he was also somewhat naive. His original motives were idealistic. He loved Israel, he said, and was raised to believe in the centrality of that country to the Jewish people around the world. "As far as I am concerned,"

he said, "I am as much a loyal son to that country [Israel] as anybody has ever been . . . I did my best. I'm sorry if I wasn't the most effective from a long-range standpoint. But I did my best." He said he still hoped to move to Israel some day and to live "a productive life in Israel."

For his own protection, Pollard has been isolated in a 6-by-9-foot cell. He has received numerous threats from white supremacy and Black Muslim hate groups. If he is ever thrown into a general prison population, he could be severely hurt or killed.

As an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Navy, he said he had come across what he described as very frightening information concerning

security threats facing Israel. After learning that this information was not routinely being provided to Israel through official channels, he decided to act on his own.

Pollard maintained that he never actually spied "against" the United States. He said he merely provided Israel—a friendly ally—with information concerning Arab military threats. He did not see anything contradictory in his being "a good Zionist and a good American . . . I certainly didn't believe what I did would hurt the United States," he said. "Far from it." Indeed, he insisted that by strengthening Israel, he was also strengthening the United States since Israel serves as a reliable and vital strategic ally in an important part of the world.

"I was neither engaged in nor directed to conduct any activities against the United States, and I will never admit to that fact," he said. Pollard now acknowledges, however, that his rationalization was a bad mistake. "I broke the law," he said. "I'm not mincing any words. I broke the law. I've never considered myself above the law."

When I asked him how he wound up in this mess, he became somewhat philosophical. "I've never met a man who had better motives for all the trouble he's caused," he said of himself, referring to a quote from the Graham Greene novel, "The Quiet American."

But although Pollard must personally bear responsibility for his

very serious error in judgment, the Israeli government also shares in the blame. It was, after all, Israel's hard-nosed masterspy Rafael Eitan who ran Pollard in Washington and who effectively pressured him into accepting money for his espionage activities. The official Israeli position suggests that Pollard was part of a "rogue" operation. U.S. officials, however, doubt this explanation, pointing out that Eitan has since been appointed head of Israel Chemicals, a large, government-owned company. U.S. officials see the appointment as Eitan's reward.

Despite numerous suggestions in the news media since his arrest outside the Israeli embassy on Nov. 25, 1985, Pollard was no mercenary. His Israeli handlers insisted that he accept money for his services, in part to draw him further into their network. At first, he had to be reimbursed for expensive overseas liaisons. It was too dangerous for Pollard to meet with Eitan in Washington. Paris was safer. But later, there were other expenses that became a necessary part of his espionage activities. The money was Israel's idea, not his, he said. "I didn't like the monetary aspect of the relationship, however essential it was . . . I was never comfortable with the money."

He was especially upset over the picture of him that has been conveyed in the news media over this past year—as a braggart who was selling out the United States simply for money. "This has been the single most disappointing thing that has happened."

Pollard said he was "befuddled" and "heartbroken" by the decision of the Israeli government and the American Jewish community to effectively abandon him and his family since his arrest. "I feel the same way that one of Israel's pilots would feel if, after being shot down, nobody made an effort to come get him," he said. "Not even lifted a finger—in fact, questioned his abilities and his motivations."

His mistake, he said, was in not emigrating to Israel years ago. He said he had contemplated such a move since the Six-Day War in 1967, when he was 13 years old. "My heart has always been in the East," he said. But he stayed in the West.

In recent days, several Israeli officials in Washington have expressed their personal view that the Israeli government did indeed behave less than honorably toward Pollard and his family over the past year. He was a devoted agent who provided Israel with very important information, they confirmed. But they said that the government was primarily concerned about the "bigger" issue of U.S.-Israeli relations rather than the personal fate of Pollard and his wife. By abandoning them and cooperating with the U.S. investigation—to the point of even providing hard evidence against him—Israel hoped to limit the damage to its relationship with the United States.

Pollard has understandably felt betrayed by the official Israeli reaction. "By avoiding the issue," he said, "all Israel is doing is leaving an unburied body to rot and stink and foul the air. . . . I'm tired. I'm frustrated. I'm scared as hell for myself and my wife. I just want to end this."

His biggest regret, he said, was that his case has allowed allegations of "dual loyalty" against American Jews to surface "among bigots within and without government."

He said he still loves Israel as "passionately and as fervently as I did before." He described it as "home" and the people there as "family."

All of which adds up to a real tragedy for Pollard and his family. In the end, after serving his time in jail, Pollard will probably wind up in Israel, anxious to begin a new life. In the meantime, he suffers for his blurred vision.

Wolf Blitzer is the Washington correspondent for The Jerusalem Post and author of "Between Washington and Jerusalem: A Reporter's Notebook."
